

eligible SFMNP participants by expanding benefits to more persons, by enhancing current benefits, or a combination of both, and expanding the awareness and use of farmers' markets, roadside stands, and CSA programs;

(iii) The ability of the State agency to operate the existing SFMNP satisfactorily;

(iv) The management capabilities of the State agency to expand; and

(v) Whether, in the case of a State agency that intends to use the funding to increase the value of the Federal benefits received by a participant, the funding provided will increase the rate of coupon redemption.

(b) *Amendments.* At any time after approval, the State agency may amend the State Plan to reflect changes. The State agency shall submit such amendments to FNS for approval. The proposed amendments shall be signed by the State-designated official responsible for ensuring that the SFMNP is operated in accordance with the State Plan. The amendments must be approved by FNS prior to implementation.

(c) *Retention of copy.* A copy of the approved State Plan shall be kept on file at the State agency for public inspection.

#### § 249.5 Selection of new State agencies.

In selecting new State agencies, FNS will use objective criteria to rank and approve State plans submitted in accordance with § 249.4. In making this ranking, FNS will consider the amount of funds necessary to operate the SFMNP successfully in the State compared with other States and with the total amount of funds available to the SFMNP, the number of participants estimated to be served, and the projected benefit level. Approval of a State Plan does not equate to an obligation on the part of FNS to fund the SFMNP within that State.

### Subpart C—Participant Eligibility

#### § 249.6 Participant eligibility.

(a) *Eligibility for certification.* Individuals who are eligible to receive Federal benefits under the SFMNP are those who meet the following criteria:

(1) *Categorical eligibility.* Participants must be not less than 60 years of age, except that State agencies may exercise the option to deem Native Americans who are 55 years of age or older as categorically eligible for SFMNP benefits. State agencies may, at their discretion, also deem disabled individuals less than 60 years of age who are currently living in housing facilities occupied primarily by older individuals where congregate nutrition services are provided, as categorically eligible to receive SFMNP benefits.

(2) *Residency requirement.* The State agency may establish a residency requirement for SFMNP applicants. The State agency may determine a service area for any local agency, and may require that an applicant be residing within the service area at the time of application to be eligible for the Program. However, the State agency may not impose any durational or fixed residency requirements.

(3) *Income eligibility.* The State agency must ensure that local agencies determine income eligibility through the use of a clear and simple application process approved by the State agency. Participants must have a maximum household income of not more than 185 percent of the annual poverty income guidelines, or be determined automatically income eligible based on current participation/eligibility to receive benefits in another means-tested program, as designated by the State agency, for which income eligibility is set at or below 185 percent of the poverty income guidelines and for which documentation of family income is required. FNS will announce the income poverty guidelines annually.

(b) *Documentation of income eligibility.*

(1) *Automatically income eligible applicants.* The State or local agency must require applicants determined to be automatically income eligible to provide documentation of their eligibility to participate in another means-tested assistance program, as designated by the State agency.

(2) *Other applicants.*

(i) The State or local agency must require all other applicants to provide, at